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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 STATE 051536

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP MAY 21 - DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH CUBAN  
PEOPLE

REF: (A) STATE 46997, (B) STATE 45792

11. (U) This is an action message; see paras 3-9.

12. (SBU) Per reftels, Embassies have been asked to undertake activities and encourage host governments and NGOs to undertake activities for a day of solidarity with the Cuban people on May 21. For post information only, President Bush is expected to host an event at the White House in honor of Cuban civil society and to highlight political prisoners on May 21. This event has not been announced officially, so posts are asked not to share this information. This cable provides guidance and instructions for posts' reference and requests response cable reporting on actions taken in Host Country.

13. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: As per the NSC, all posts are requested to confirm via front channel cable all activities or actions to be taken by the post and/or the Host Government in support of the Solidarity Day event, such as a human rights related event with local NGOs. At a minimum, all posts should seek to place an editorial under the Ambassador or Charge's signature in a major local newspaper. (See paragraph 9). In addition, descriptions of activities sponsored by posts (such as round-tables, exhibits, movie showings, etc.) as well as activities sponsored by host country nationals whether NGOs or Government officials should be confirmed and reported.

14. (SBU) A large number of Posts have responded to reftels with their plans for Cuba Solidarity Day. All Posts planning events/outreach, including those that have already reported, are requested to report and/or reconfirm plans and activities NLT OOB Monday May 19. Slug responses for your Regional Bureau Public Diplomacy Affairs Office (PD Desks). In addition, all Posts are requested to send after action reports and media coverage, per White House request, NLT COB Thursday, May 22, to your Regional Bureau Public Diplomacy Affairs Office (PD Desks). Post should urge NGOs hosting events and activities to list their events in [www.solidaridadcuba.org](http://www.solidaridadcuba.org) which provides a pinpoint map mechanism to track events. Events or activities wholly sponsored by the USG should not be posted on the web site.

15. (U) Paragraphs 6-9 provide documents which have been cleared by the White House and are for use in connection with Solidarity Day activities.  
-- Paragraph 6 "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People" contains a backgrounder for embassy's internal use, explaining the genesis and rationale for this event.

-- Paragraph 7 "Demonstrating Solidarity with the Cuban People's Struggle for Freedom" is a fact sheet regarding May 21 activities.

-- Paragraph 8 "Responses to Anticipated Negative Reactions to Cuba Solidarity Day" contains points for posts to draw from on an "if asked" basis.

-- Paragraph 9 "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People" is the cleared op-ed for posts' use.

#### 16. (U) Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People

##### Background:

At an April 7, 2007 conference on Cuba in Miami, Commerce Secretary and co-chair of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba Carlos Gutierrez announced that the USG would participate in a "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People" on May 21. The purpose of this event is to promote peaceful democratic change in Cuba by showing broad international support for the Cuban people.

The current regime in Havana seeks to legitimize itself both at home and abroad, undertaking various economic initiatives, none of which addresses the economy's fundamental flaws, nor addresses the human rights and fundamental freedoms denied to the Cuban people. Raul Castro's succession to power was carried forward without a democratic vote by the Cuban people.

For these reasons, the President of the United States will host an event on May 21 in support of a "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People" to focus on the plight of prisoners of conscience and the lack of civil and political freedoms in Cuba.

STATE 00051536 002 OF 005

This date coincides with a period when Cubans all over the island commemorate Cuban patriots who have suffered at the hands of the regime for the cause of freedom and human rights, including the anniversary of the death of Pedro Luis Boitel, a poet-activist who died on May 25, 1972 at age 39 while on a hunger strike in Cuba's "Castle of the Prince" prison.

##### A Call to Action:

Democracy activists and non-governmental organizations plan to demonstrate their support for human rights on the island during the mid-May timeframe.

The people of Cuba need to know that they have world-wide solidarity and support for their efforts to achieve genuine political and economic change in Cuba.

We ask other countries to join in this effort to highlight the deplorable human rights situation on the island and the need for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in October 2007.

We urge countries to draw attention to the plight of Cuba's approximately 240 prisoners of conscience plus the additional 5,000 sentenced for dangerousness with a call for legitimate democratic transition in Cuba by:

- Holding a press event;
- Issuing a statement; and
- Encouraging NGOs to organize events and issue statements.

Cuba remains a nation where the people are denied the most basic freedoms and opportunities, freedoms that governments in our hemisphere, except for Cuba, have agreed to honor and defend in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and much of the world community,

including Cuba, has promised to honor through the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We will call on the Cuban regime to allow its citizens to exercise internationally recognized civil and political rights and freedoms and unleash the potential of the Cuban people to give them an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of democracy and the benefits of a 21st century economy.

United States policy remains clear and strong: we seek a free, just, prosperous, and sovereign Cuba to join the community of democracies in the Americas. We want the Cuban people to freely and democratically define their country's destiny.

#### 17. (U) Demonstrating Solidarity with the Cuban People's Struggle for Freedom

To promote peaceful democratic change in Cuba and show support for the Cuban people, May 21 will mark a "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People." The day will focus on the plight of prisoners of conscience and the lack of civil and political freedoms in Cuba. The Cuban regime denies its people the most basic freedoms and opportunities that are enshrined in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. The current regime seeks to legitimize itself both at home and abroad through initiatives which fail to address fundamental economic flaws or promote basic freedoms denied to the Cuban people. Raul Castro's succession to power occurred without a democratic vote by the Cuban people.

Countries and civil society groups worldwide have an opportunity to join Cuban democracy leaders and non-governmental organizations in commemorating May 21 as a "Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People". Democracy leaders and non-governmental organizations plan to demonstrate their support for human rights on the island during mid-May when Cubans across the island traditionally commemorate Cuban patriots who have suffered at the hands of the regime for the cause of freedom and human rights, including the anniversary of the death of Pedro Luis Boitel, a poet-activist who died on May 25, 1972 at age 39 while on a hunger strike in Cuba's "Castle of the Prince" prison. The people of Cuba need to know that they have worldwide solidarity and support for their efforts to achieve genuine political and economic freedom in Cuba.

Demonstrate your solidarity for Cubans' struggle for

STATE 00051536 003 OF 005

freedom by:

- Holding a press event;
- Issuing a statement; and
- Encouraging NGOs to organize events and issue statements which
  - Highlight the deplorable human rights situation on the island;
  - Call for the unconditional release of the approximately 240 prisoners of conscience (including Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet) plus the additional 5,000 sentenced for dangerousness;
  - Call for the Cuban regime to allow its citizens to exercise internationally recognized civil and political rights and freedoms; and
  - Call for legitimate democratic transition in Cuba.

Freedom supporters in Cuba seek a free, just, prosperous, and sovereign Cuba to join the community of democracies in the Americas and want the Cuban people to define their country's destiny freely and democratically.

Key Cuba Solidarity Day Website Links: Please link to these important Websites from your home page and encourage

visitors, members and affiliates to sign the petition.  
- [www.solidaridadcuba.org](http://www.solidaridadcuba.org) is a useful resource for the international community about how to participate in Cuba Solidarity Day.  
- At [www.peticioncuba.org](http://www.peticioncuba.org) you can find and sign a petition for the release of Cuba's political prisoners.

18. (U) Responses to Anticipated Negative Reactions to Cuba Solidarity Day

1A. CUBA SOLIDARITY DAY IS A U.S. PROPAGANDA EXERCISE

RESPONSE: The U.S. and other governments are joining NGOs and citizens of democratic countries all over the world to show solidarity with Cubans seeking peaceful democratic change to their country. Together we are calling on the Cuban regime to allow its citizens to exercise these internationally recognized civil and political rights and freedoms and unleash the potential of the Cuban people to give them an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of democracy and to build a 21st century economy. The U.S. advocates on behalf of human rights and democracy around the world. It's a cornerstone of our foreign policy.

1B. U.S. PUBLIC PRESSURE IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE; ENGAGEMENT IS BETTER

RESPONSE: Putting a spotlight on the plight of hundreds of political prisoners and their families who suffer in Cuba is the right thing to do. Cuba needs to let these people return to their families and permit them to fully exercise the rights as they agreed to under the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. History shows that the most effective way to protect victims of human rights violations is by shining a light on government abuses.

1C. CUBA HAS SIGNED U.N. RIGHTS COVENANTS AND IS ENGAGING WITH THE U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

RESPONSE: While Cuba has signed the international human rights Covenants, it remains to be seen whether they will proceed with ratification and actually implement the obligations set forth in these instruments. We note that the Cuban government continues to hold hundreds of people prisoner simply for disagreeing with their government, with many sentenced to jail terms of 20-25 years. The regime in Havana has not taken any steps to dismantle the apparatus of control and repression it uses to detain and harass Cubans for peacefully expressing dissent. It has denied access to most UN Human Rights Council officials and ignored repeated requests by the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Cuban jails.

1D. U.S. POLICY HAS FAILED TO BRING CHANGE TO CUBA

RESPONSE: The dictatorship in Cuba has failed to bring the real change that Cubans across the island increasingly want. Cuba's democratic future will be determined by Cubans in their country. The sovereign people of Cuba deserve the same right to choose their government through genuinely free and fair elections that citizens in their neighboring countries do. It is time for Cuba to rejoin its neighbors, to meet the standard set by the region in the Inter-American Democratic charter.

1E. U.S. SANCTIONS HURT THE CUBAN PEOPLE

STATE 00051536 004 OF 005

RESPONSE: U.S. policy denies resources to the Cuban dictatorship and encourages private support that directly benefits the Cuban people. The U.S. is the largest source of private humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, adding up to some \$240 million in 2007.

#### 1F. DISSIDENTS ARE PAID U.S. MERCENARIES

RESPONSE: Cubans who advocate peaceful democratic change for their country are patriots. Democratic societies have an obligation to support and accompany people in dictatorships who seek freedom through democratic change. Societies that recently made the transition from closed societies understand the value of international solidarity and have in particular been firm supporters of the Cuban people.

#### 1G. RAUL CASTRO IS A REFORMER; GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO MAKE CHANGES

RESPONSE: Measures decreed by Raul Castro to remove some elements of the extraordinary restrictions placed on Cubans do not address the fundamental flaw in Cuba's command economy—it is run from the top down. They are tactical changes by the current government designed to the mitigate calls for real change on the island. They do not dismantle the repressive apparatus of state control nor improve the conditions of the people of Cuba. The Washington Post points out that Cuba's so-called reforms in agriculture fall short of steps taken years ago by North Korea.

#### 1H. THE U.S. IS HOLDING 5 CUBAN "HEROES" PRISONER AND REFUSES TO LET THEIR WIVES VISIT

RESPONSE: The Cuban government acknowledges that the so-called "Cuban Five" are agents and officers of Cuba's foreign intelligence service. They were convicted in 2001 of having committed crimes in the United States as part of a spy group that Cuban intelligence called the "Wasp Network."

The U.S. has granted visas for dozens of relatives to visit these prisoners. The U.S. government has not granted visas to the wives of two of the prisoners. One of these women was a member of the Wasp Network who was deported for engaging in activity related to espionage and is ineligible to return to the United States. The other was a candidate for training as a Directorate of Intelligence U.S.-based spy when U.S. authorities broke up the network.

#### 19. (U) OP-ED: Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People

On May 21 we will celebrate the courage and determination of the Cuban people as they seek their freedom and voice in establishing a democratic future for their country. On this day, in the United States and elsewhere, we will commemorate a Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People.

We will call for the release of all Cuban political prisoners and repeal of all measures that allow the Cuban government to arrest citizens for carrying out acts of peaceful dissent. Cubans need to know that they have international support in their struggle for freedom and human rights, as the people in Central Europe once did.

(Posts may want to mention any planned local activities here)

There has been much talk in the media about the recent changes that have been announced in Cuba. Yes, Raul Castro has replaced his brother in some of his positions of authority, but this is a process in which Cuba's citizens had no say. And yes, Cubans can now buy cell phones and microwave ovens and stay in five star hotels. While Cubans may welcome such changes, they are no doubt hoping for much more. With the average monthly wage in Cuba at less than \$20, these items are still largely out of reach and won't let Cubans do what citizens in other countries in the Americas are doing: seizing the opportunity provided by open societies and open markets.

The sad fact is that Cuba's citizens still live in a repressive state, as they have for almost half a century.

Last December, Cuban authorities stormed a Catholic church, tear-gassed parishioners, and dragged 18 worshipers out. A Catholic official called the episode, "the worst attack against a church in 45 years." And just a few weeks ago, the "Ladies in White," who march peacefully each Sunday on behalf of freedom for their unjustly imprisoned loved ones, were beaten and dragged

STATE 00051536 005 OF 005

away from the " Plaza of the Revolution" when they sought to deliver a petition to their government asking for the release of political prisoners. Is this change?

So how will we know when an enduring process of democratic change is underway on the island? We will know there is a new Cuba when Cubans have the freedom to organize, assemble, and speak their minds. We will know there is a new Cuba when a free and independent press has the power to operate without censors. We will know there is a new Cuba when the Cuban government allows Cubans to open their own businesses and improve the economic well-being of their families. Above all, we will know there is at least a start towards a new Cuba when the regime releases its political prisoners and engages the Cuban people in an open and comprehensive dialogue about the future of their country.

Solidarity with the Cuban people means supporting their struggle to obtain all the freedoms enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as those in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Cuba recently signed the latter agreement, but when will the government's actions comport with their commitments? As any Cuban political prisoner can attest, the Cuban state hasn't implemented the provision that says: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Indeed, Cubans have been arrested and foreigners expelled for handing out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself.

On May 21st the United States Government will join in solidarity with the Cuban people, particularly the prisoners of conscience on the island who remain behind bars. We hope you, too, will mark May 21st with a special observance in honor of the people of Cuba who continue to fight for the right to be free.

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